

# **TOWARD A BREATHING TEXT:**

**The Art of Madness**

**Insanity as a Creative Act**

**Olchar E. Lindsann**

## HUMAN LIFE IS A NEUROSIS

that we are a disease is indisputable. ask the dodo, the air you breathe, or a young african mother dying of rational western greed. yet the root of our toxicity is tangled in the deep nerves. from the moment we listened to our thought we were alone, and mad. we became double: we are language, and we are... whatever our madness convinces us of. language is abstraction; abstraction is the root of madness. DO NOT FEAR: this is as it should be! but we have become lazy. the grammar of our intellect has slipped into torpor, we have enslaved ourselves to History and yet cut off our left hand, Tradition.

## OUR CULTURE IS COUGHING

it is bleeding. we refuse to see our culture because it shows us the cipher of our languages, and it is a gaping pit, a reminder that we are not sane, that our languages are mad and creative and sleep by the side of Blake's Satan, not by the sides of our hometown sweethearts. it is in the nature of the serpent to recoil upon itself. we refuse to look at our culture because it bears the scars and wounds of three-thousand years of insanity, each leaving its teeth marked in the skin, millennia of progressive insanities racking the frame of the culture, one after the other, one simultaneously with the other. the body of our culture is made of nothing but these wounds, and it reminds us of our own madness, of the responsibility that our madness demands of us.

### WE MUST LOOK OUR WOUNDED CULTURE IN THE EYES

we, like our infinite languages, must read ourselves in the traces of our systems of thought. we must WILLFULLY, LOVINGLY, and COURAGEOUSLY add our marks to our culture, the body of wounds of which we are the responsible cells.

## OUR CULTURE IS COUGHING

can insanity leave any mark but a wound? if not, then nothing but wounds can exist, for MADNESS IS THE PREDICATE FOR OUR THOUGHT- this fatal or natal division and separation from (extra-linguistic) experience composes our languages.

if you ask me how one might best define humanity, I will answer you:

### A SCHIZOPHRENIC MONKEY.

our basic madness takes the form of a metalanguage. the inborn language of survival and instinct is not enough for us; we have created another set of laws- that of language- which works independently of and often against these instincts, and which, moreover, by its very nature, CAN NEVER BE SATISFIED. will anyone deny that such an act is not sane? That it is destined to destroy the easy mode of existence that the uncomplicated laws of survival had set forth for us? and through this madness that I call language we create other madnesses, phantoms which do not exist: history, morality, art, science, love, hate, the future, the out-of-sight yet present.

we are split between the cells of our bodies and the texts of our minds.

### WE ARE LANGUAGE and LANGUAGE IS ALWAYS MAD

the relationship of language to communication is scarcely more than incidental and is tenuous at best.

COMMUNICATION DOES NOT NECESSITATE LANGUAGE.  
COMMUNICATION MERELY WORKS WITHIN THE SYSTEMS OF LANGUAGE.  
we must see that language is not merely a tool for expression, description, conversion, or  
coercion, and can be used for more than social, personal, and intellectual lullabies.

LANGUAGE IS THE STRUCTURING OF THOUGHT,  
that is,

THE STRUCTURE OF OUR INSANITY.

the structure of our cultural insanity  
the structure of our social insanities

the structure of our intellectual, artistic, scientific, mathematic, and religious insanities  
the structure of our individual insanities  
which are of paramount importance.

if communication winds its way through the sea of language- a sea of infinite depth,  
without borders, without surface or bottom, and yet of undeniable FORM- it is because  
there is nothing outside this sea of traces and significance which offers recourse to it or  
requires it. outside of language is the deaf, dumb, and faceless FACT of the rocks on the  
one hand, and a passing and unconscious burst of blood and adrenaline on the other. on  
the one side there is no speaker, on the other there is no addressee. outside language is  
nothing but the silent Real in its various forms. outside language is nothing but the  
present.

THE PAST AND THE FUTURE ARE THE OFFSPRING OF OUR MADNESS.

THEY ARE THE PRODUCTS OF LANGUAGE.

the past, in this instant, exists only in the infinite texts of the world. without them its claw  
would not be set in our flesh. the future exists only in the texts of the wor(l)d, in the

NOTION of an absent actuality which can be posited only thanks to the terms of  
language. in the present, there is only action. there is only NOW, and instinct. this is sane.  
what is more sane than self-preservation and comfort? what practical use are the future  
and the past? they are useless except to those who are insane and alive. THE QUESTION  
IS A RHETORICAL OFFSPRING OF MADNESS. reasons do not exist. causality is a  
symptom of our madness. this does not mean we cannot use it: it means we MUST. we  
must use every form our madness takes, and change it, re-create it.

## OUR CULTURE IS COUGHING

we have failed in our responsibility to carefully and lovingly nurture and tend to our  
insanity. we have not become less mad, but our madness has grown ravenous, denies  
itself, has grown simultaneously transparent, blind, and fatalistic. it is psychopathic and  
suicidal. we buy our insanity at supermarkets and set it in front of televised, printed, and  
spun doggerel to let it grow misshapen as it may. we must learn to create it ourselves.

## THE HUMAN MIND IS A GROWING TEXT

the mind itself is disseminative. if language is the stuff of thought, then the mind itself is  
a text, open to endless play. the apparent text of a poem, a painting, a mathematical  
equation, the steering wheel of a car, your breath, is merely a suspension of elements, re-  
presents this particular system of denials and exclusions; the text itself is defined by this  
structure but is itself infinite, every element generating or revealing numberless

associations from all classes of linguistic, extralinguistic, and prelinguistic elements. so with the human mind.

#### WE MUST LEARN TO READ THE TEXTS-OF-US.

any worthy poet can open the text of the mind, though none can exhaust it. this has been the mission of poetry, of all the arts and sciences, since the inception of a metalanguage; that is to say, since Narcissus first glanced into the basin of the skull of our species. the text is a metasystem comprised of a limitless play of cultural, personal, temporal, and physical systems, the clusters and rhythms of these systems intertwined and pulsing with potential.

why read Blake in the library and biography in the synapses?

THE MIND MUST BE TREATED AS RIGOROUSLY AS ANY OTHER TEXT.  
and like every system our culture has engaged, we must take responsibility for it and create.

#### PERSONALITY IS A MATTER OF SELECTION.

by an unwarranted recourse to anthropomorphic analogy, one might say that the apparent text of a poem, of a symphony, of a dance, of a police siren, of a flake of skin, IS THAT PART OF THE TEXT BY WHICH THE SYSTEM OF THE LARGER TEXT IS ORIENTED.

THE MIND IS A SUSPENSION OF ELEMENTS, re-presents this particular system of denials and exclusions; the text/mind itself is defined by this structure but is itself infinite, every element generating or revealing numberless associations from all classes of linguistic, extralinguistic, and prelinguistic elements. the personality is the form of the unique text of an individual mind, just as the apparent text of a poem, an equation, an antidote, a can of hair spray, a cough, is the form of a unique text, a unique system of experience and relations. the mind is not a collection of "thoughts." it is a sovereign FORM of thought.

#### WE ARE EACH A TEXT

we might situate the text-that-we-are near the (anti)idea of the unconscious, and find the apparent text within sight of the ego.

we must learn to inhabit the written text in order to learn to inhabit the text-of-us.

we must learn the imaginative, which is to say the disseminative jungle of the specific text-that-we-are, the way each dancer learns the text of that body. only then can we learn to shape it.

#### OUR CULTURE IS COUGHING

it is hacking up blood. our society is dry and withered. it no longer knows what blood is. coins and automobiles will not sop it off. something greater is required.

#### WHAT LITERARY, PLASTIC, OR MUSICAL FORM IS AS RIPE FOR CREATIVE, WILLFUL, MANIPULATION AS THE MIND?

as we learn to open a written text, to immerse ourselves in its shifts of meaning and signification, to follow its traces and release the systems within systems, the numberless associations and relationships of which the apparent text is merely the crust, we must also

learn to open the Lived text, destroy the supposed univalence of “self-”identification and evaluation. we must learn to follow these traces, to keep our footing when the plates of our nerves shift beneath our feet, always watching, sensitive to the complex meta-languages and micro-languages that lead us on our way. but then we must go farther, teach ourselves to ACT, to limn and scan, to rearrange and redraw the texts of our minds. we must cautiously learn to handle the brushes and pens, the pitches, the tensions and the multivalent rhythms of our synapses. mad and deluded as we are, as we must be- for as soon as we immerse ourselves in language all else is turned to putty- we must CREATE A NEW MADNESS, a beautiful, dangerous, open, disseminated text-of-us.

WE DO NOT EXIST. ONLY OUR MADNESS CONVINCES US OF THE CONTRARY.

we are thus more free than we think, AS free as we THINK. we must cease to be ourselves and become the SPEAKERS, not the SUBJECTS of our own lives. the author is dead because s/he never existed. the first-person must return to its natural state: an IDEA, not an IDENTITY. if privileged, the first-person becomes the signpost and the excuse for the sickly detours of our insanity. it becomes the dam that prevents the river of our language from watering the wastes of our parched culture.

REFUSE SUPERMARKET INSANITIES.

WE MUST WRITE OUR OWN MINDS LIKE WE WRITE POEMS.

THIS IS THE ART OF MADNESS.

for centuries, artists have imposed their personalities upon the works that they created. WE MUST RESTORE THE ARTIST TO A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CREATIVE WORK. LET THE CREATIVE WILL IMPOSE ITSELF UPON THE ARTIST'S PERSONALITY. let the instrument of creation (the artist) itself BECOME a creative work. our culture wastes away because we have become passive. only by attacking the inviolability of the artist-as-subject can we become FULLY sensitive to the workings of the languages through which we manifest ourselves. let us, then, MOLD OURSELVES.

the age of subversive propaganda is dead. our society no longer cares. to pile “ideas” and “points” and “arguments” in front of a society too deep in pathological denial to CARE about them, is as futile as piling condolences over the corpse of our culture.

WE MUST CHANGE THE WAY THAT WE, OUR CULTURE, AND OUR SOCIETY THINK. we must MAKE them care.

there is only one register on which this change of the mind can take place: the languages, the structures of the mind itself.

THOUSANDS OF YEARS OF CREATIVE ENDEAVOR HAVE PREPARED THE WAY FOR US.

every creative work, every critical and metalinguistic enterprise can serve as a study for this great slow work.

each can serve for other countless things as well.

HOW MANY WORLD WARS MUST BE WAGED BEFORE WE TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE STRUCTURES OF OUR THOUGHT?

we have used art to make our buildings beautiful, to make our speech beautiful, to make our bodies beautiful, our movements beautiful, our walls beautiful, to make beautiful objects, beautiful sounds, beautiful words.

WHEN WILL WE DEEM THE MIND WORTHY OF BEING MADE BEAUTIFUL?

we now write criticisms on critical studies of shifts of critical thought about various subjects. we make distinctions so fine we require specialized dictionaries. with every layer of self-examination (that is, metalanguage) we fracture further, we are drawn further into the space of dissemination. we ourselves become more fractured. what purpose has this millennia-long process had, unless to bring us to this point:

#### WE MUST CREATE OURSELVES.

the stakes are high here. if we err, we lose control of our madness, we cannot swim in the maldorean sea of language into which we have jumped. the madness devours us. here we must be fully immersed, feel the dread swirl of liquid text splash against our chests, our throats. we must offer our lives to the texts that ARE OUR LIVES. the poet's, the sculptor's, the composer's, the physicist's, the philosopher's, the reformer's personality IS AN INSTRUMENT FOR PRODUCING TEXTS AND AFFECTING CULTURE. behind it are all the elements of y/our specific text, y/our specific form of insanity. take responsibility for this form. learn to arrange its slips and oblique faces the way you form a poem, a nocturne, a requiem, a scene, a nervous twitch, a rhetoric.

#### CHANGING OUR THOUGHTS HAS FAILED FOR OVER 2,000 YEARS.

#### WE MUST CHANGE OURSELVES.

the quick route of propaganda is dead. it is dead because it depends on a majority of people who manifest themselves through action; our society is one which exults passivity. we must take the slow route, the deep and murky route, for it is the only one left to us. our future is in the hands of those willing to stake their SELF-IDENTIFICATIONS on the recessutation of our culture.

who can do this but the painters, the poets, the composers, the architects, the dancers, the critics, the theorists?

#### WE HAVE TRAINED FOR THIS EPOCH SINCE THE FIRST TIME A HUMAN MIND CORRECTED ITSELF

SINCE THE FIRST TIME A HUMAN IMPROVED UPON A STORY  
SINCE THE FIRST TIME A WORD OR A LINE WAS CORRECTED

#### WE MUST CLAIM THE RIGHT TO SHAPE OUR OWN MADNESS! NOT ONLY THE MADNESS OF OUR EGOS but:

THE MADNESS OF OUR EPOCH  
THE PSYCHOSIS OF OUR TIMES  
THE UN-HEALTH OF OUR CULTURE

the art of madness is not merely a “personal” practice. if the cells change, so too, with time and by degrees, will the larger organism. language is a simultaneity of networks of vitality. languages twined with languages, nested and communicating within and between each other, like cells in the body. our various madnesses, our many languages, are the cells of our culture. our culture has no mind because it IS a mind. it is a text of which we are all constituent linguistic systems.

our culture created itself. the idea of creation, of origin, cannot exist outside of language, of textuality, even though textuality itself is the killer of origins.

here is an aporia.  
cradle it in you.

this is why all cultures must be insane. they exist only within their own criteria. this idea could be taken farther.

like the text of an individual, the text of a culture is in constant flux. let us call the temporal, momentary manifestation of the apparent text: society. each society has its own form of madness, its own systems of denials, fetishes, neuroses, and obsessions. Each has its own languages.

### WHAT LITERARY, PLASTIC, OR MUSICAL FORM IS AS RIPE FOR CREATIVE, WILLFUL, MANIPULATION AS SOCIETY?

#### OUR CULTURE IS COUGHING

it has turned its back on itself.  
THIS IS OUR FAULT.

our society has given up. it has refused to acknowledge that which it cannot understand: ITSELF. our society refuses to follow the shifts and traces of its own thought. it has stripped language of its life, in an attempt to escape from the consequences of its madness. this has made matters worse.

the process has been long. since philosophers started taking hemlock, our culture has slowly degraded language, nailed it to various crosses, charts, graphs, and dictionary entries. it has insisted on excluding the disseminative properties of the text. western society has progressively shied away from and denied the rift, the insanity which the “existence” of the text presupposes; but it has, to a greater or lesser extent, acknowledged the responsibility of a society- an apparent and essentially localized text- to the culture, a culmination of texts. our society no longer merely rationalizes culture, nor seeks to change it or engage with it; it ignores it.

we are under the worst possible misconception: the conception that we are SANE.  
our society believes that language is safe.  
that it is dead.  
our insanity is running amok.

#### OUR CULTURE IS COUGHING

by an unwarranted recourse to anthropomorphic analogy, one might say that the apparent text of a poem, of a play, of a hat, of a rubber chicken, of a moan,  
IS MERELY THAT PART OF THE TEXT WHICH IS CONSCIOUS.

we might situate our culture near the (anti)idea of the unconscious, and find our society within sight of the ego.  
our society is not healthy.  
it is deep in denial.  
it is passive.

#### EVERY EPOCH HAS HAD ITS OWN MADNESS

this could be systematically shown.

ask the oracles at delphi; women who smashed their ribcages to fit into corsets; a nation who responds to the imminent disappearance of oil by wasting it with hysterical abandon, like never before; victorians who sang the praises of women their actions despised; the

countless individuals who saw witches fly through the air, and eyeballs roll where they should not exist. note the obsessions that erected a cathedral over many generations, the pathologies that wiped out two continents and destroyed another, the subtle balance of idealism and coercion that gave birth to chivalry, the desperate decadence of the Restoration, the equally desperate idealism that led half a generation to create an insane society founded on an idealism itself insane, a parasitic society healthier, more responsible to the culture, than was its host.

there have been far more healthy individuals than healthy cultures.

### OUR CULTURE IS COUGHING

at the present time our society will not admit its relationship to culture. the ego has disowned the mind of which it is merely a limb.

#### THE SITUATION IS NOT NEW.

for over six centuries after the fall of Rome society unhinged from itself, only a few individuals hunched in universities, tended to arcane texts, in the hope that society would unite with the culture once again, change it, grow with and into it. in the meantime, the culture lost itself, its insanity became more dangerous than ever. ask the children of the crusades, of the inquisition, of incestuous wars. the vast majority lived almost (relatively) without language, without the question, almost without insanity. like slaves. the majority of individuals in our present society yearn and strive to live this way. slaves with full stomachs. slaves with college degrees.

our madness has become perverted. we are on the verge of suicide.

### OUR CULTURE IS COUGHING

there are reasons for this. the apparent text of a poem, a chair, a film, an advertisement, an adam's-apple, is safer, easier, when one is less than entirely sensitive to it, when one equates it like a bright child with communication. when one learns to breathe the black holes that are the actual constituents of the text- when language is allowed to see itself in the basins of our skulls- the responsibility of our madness grows heavy and sodden on our minds- that is, on ourselves. this as yet arcane study, this initiation, takes time, until

we learn to use time, like all other ideas, as one condition among many in our restructuring of the texts-of-us. this process works within the culture as within the individual; but individuals are more often courageous than societies. our society has come close to what many individuals have seen for millennia: every human thought is a rationalization. every social and linguistic structure is a delusion. our society's self-awareness has driven us over the brink. we want to retreat to blissful ignorance, but god is dead and we have usurped him. we are terrified. there is no escape. we are faced with only one choice: to fall deeper into self-reflection, or to DESTROY the idea of "self-reflection" on every level, to destroy all mirrors and free our intellects from the chains of re-production; the analytic faculty NEED NOT be employed to understand what we "already" "are" but can be, must become a CREATIVE AGENT.

### OUR CULTURE IS COUGHING

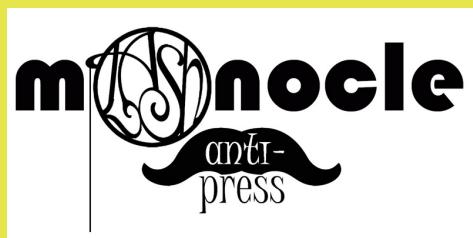
and this may be our last chance.

look your madness in the eyes! for millennia we have lived at odds with language yet  
have been conditioned by it. we are the children of language and its parents. neither  
infanticide nor parricide is acceptable. we must LIVE WITH language and engage with it,  
as active participants. take responsibility for your madness, let us all take responsibility  
for the forms our madness takes!

CLAIM YOUR NEUROSIS!  
INSANITY CAN BE CONTAGIOUS:  
YOU CAN BE A CARRIER!  
trace your lineage from kings!

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Olchar E. Lindsann. A.Da. 89 prbbrp



**mOnocle-Lash Anti-Press**

**monoclelash@gmail.com**

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